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GINSENG



GINSENG

(MEANING MAN ROOT)

Ginseng is a medicinal plant, the roots of which are prized highly by the Chinese and have been used by them for centuries. American ginseng closely resembles the Chinese and Manchurian varieties was first discovered near Montreal in 1716 and immediately a brisk trade sprang up. Ginseng originally grew wild in most of the woodlands all the way from the valley of the St. Lawrence to the mountains of Georgia and west to the Mississippi river. Cultivated ginseng grows even better in the Pacific states than in its original territory.

In Encyclopedia Americana under "advertising" is reproduced a full page of The Daily Advertiser, dated New York March 7, 1795 in which a display advertisement of ginseng is found.

The first export statistics available are for 1858 when 366053 pounds were sent to China valued at 52 cents per pound.

In the early pioneer days ginseng was a Godsend that kept many in clothes and other necessities if not from starvation. Ginseng hunting was pursued so vigorously it was threatened with extinction and attempts were made to bring it under cultivation but all attempts were failures until Geo. Stanton of Apula, N. Y. in 1885 discovered that the seeds must never be allowed to become dry and even under moist conditions it required 18 months before they would germinate. The price of roots had increased rapidly as the supply lessened and everyone who could pay the ridiculously high prices asked for the seed, tried to raise ginseng, but knew so little about its requirements mostly failed.

By 1902 the export price of ginseng was \$5.25 cents per pound dry, the cultivated being so much larger and more vigorous the exporters paid 20% more for it but the users said no and soon after the cultivated brought 20% less than the forced, pampered, over grown and usually immature, so called cultivated.

Both Encyclopedia Americana (Vol. 9) and Penny Encyclopedia (Vol. 11 printed in 1835) are accountable for the statements that ginseng is used in China for almost every ill, and that man shaped roots frequently command their weight in gold.

Practically every crop of ginseng before it reaches the consumer is sorted into a dozen or more grades, depending on age, size, outside color, inside color, wrinkles lengthwise or around, texture, specific gravity, taste, etc. and nearly every city or locality prefer or demand some particular one of these grades, all of which makes it difficult to sell except thru the regular trade channels.

Nearly every dealer in raw furs, wool and hides in the United States are dealers in ginseng and many New York dealers will send a buyer hundreds of miles to bid on two or three barrels full.

There is no record of any American or European scientific investigation to determine whether or not 400,000,000 Chinese have or have not been all wrong in their faith in ginseng for several centuries but the fact remains that Chinese scientists, Doctors, etc., that have been educated in America and Europe, have never said or done anything that has injured the ginseng business.

What must the Chinese think of the millions occidentals who repeatedly try to rub liniment thru the cuticle in the belief it can really be done and somehow neutralize or relieve their rheumatism or neuritis, etc., something both impossible and unscientific and yet so often tried.

It is no more difficult to raise a garden size patch of ginseng than it is to raise a vegetable garden, not nearly so much work because ginseng must be raised under the shade of trees, vines or artificial shade made of cull lath, lumber edgings, brush or reeds or even hay thatch as is practiced in Manchuria, it grows best under some sort of vegetable mulch like decayed sawdust, leaves, chaff, straw, or perhaps best of all is marsh hay because free of weed seeds. With any crop grown under shade and mulch there need be little fear of weeds

as is the case with vegetable gardens, this is particularly true if the ground has been previously summer fallowed.

Excepting the shade requirement ginseng will grow and thrive under the same moisture and soil condition required for garden vegetables.

The IDEAL conditions would be a rich, black, sandyloam, with considerable humus, no barnyard or commercial fertilizer except perhaps some phosphoric acid if other crops indicate a deficiency in that element. Ideal moisture conditions would be such as found under thick leaf mulch beside an old log, moist but not wet, ginseng can not stand wet feet, the ground must be well drained and yet ginseng is not particularly drouth resisting.

Ginseng will attain at least twice the size under artificial shade, compared to that grown under natural shade where it has to compete with trees or vines for plant food and moisture, but roots grown under natural shade usually bring considerable more per pound.

If artificial shade is used the lath or lumber edgings must run north and south so there will be an ever changing sunshine and shade, about one fourth sunshine, three fourths shade, the farther south the more shade. Good air drainage is desirable, tight fences objectionable.

The more sunshine given the plants without using enough to kill them the larger the root growth.

If one can provide both artificial and natural shade a good plan would be to grow under artificial shade two years or until the roots are about a half inch diameter, then transplant in the timber, where the ginseng would have to compete with the tree and vine roots and given a stunted, starved, matured appearance making it resemble the wild.

If a large planting is to be done it is usually better to do the work in the fall shortly before freezing weather, when the weather is usually favorable for many days or even weeks but if only a few pounds are to be planted it is just as well to leave the seeds in the care of some one experienced until the frost has left the ground in the spring, the seed will then germinate at once and soon show a patch of ground one may well expect to be proud of in the future.

Ginseng seed should be planted about a half inch deep then an additional half inch decayed hardwood sawdust or not having sawdust it is all right to use a full inch dirt covering patted down with the back of a spade to bring seed and soil in contact, then add enough mulch to help retain moisture but not enough to prevent seed forcing the top of the plant thru, rotted leaves would be fine, chaff, straw, shredded corn stalks or most any vegetable mulch, but not fresh pine sawdust containing much pitch.

When planting, it is a good plan to stretch a string along one side of the proposed planting, prepare the surface four feet square, place a light frame made of lath, four feet square beside the line string, prepare a paper box the right size to hold the required number of seed you propose planting on these sixteen square feet, say 12 or 20 to the square foot, scatter this required number of seed within the frame, fork enough soil from where the frame is to be placed next to cover the seed, drag the frame to next location and proceed with the measure filled as before.

If a seed bed is not used in order to economize on the ground and weeding, some growers plant in rows 16 or 18 inches apart with plants 3 or 4 inches in the row in permanent location where the crop is to mature, then cultivated with a wheel hoe the first summer to reserve moisture and prevent weeds instead of using mulch, except if this is done in the fall a mulch is used, and raked off in the spring before cultivating but it is usually best to do most of the cultivating the year before planting except where but a few pounds of seeds are planted. In either case paths must be left every four or five feet to walk in, and carry off excess of water in case there should be too much rain.

Growing a half acre ginseng should be a particularly attractive proposition for 10 or 12 year old boy or girl who aspires going to college in six years. Let him or her get a pencil and paper and do some figuring.

There are 172 square feet in a square rod and 160 square rods in an acre.

Question. How large a piece of ground would it be necessary to spade up or otherwise prepare to accomodate 50000 seed the first two years, count-

ing 12 seed to the foot, how large a piece allowing 20 seeds to the foot? How much ground would be necessary at the end of two years if transplanted say 6x6 or 6x8 or if ground is plentiful 8x8 inches allowing for paths?

If these roots at the end of six years sold for only 10 cents each how near would you be having enough to pay your expenses thru college, after deducting the cost of seed at \$2.00 per thousand.

How many hours fishing would you have to lose the first and second summer to weed a patch the size determined on.

We had one choice patch ginseng that averaged 65 cents per root, one single $\frac{3}{4}$ pound specimen worth \$1.80 at the prevailing price at that time.

They were seven or eight years old instead of five or six which is the usual time required. We also had another patch planted under trees where chickens had prevented weed growth for years, after spading and planting the ground not an hours work was ever done to cultivate and not a handful weeds to the rod ever appeared. This made 50 pounds green roots at six years, roots dry down three to one, they were worth about \$9.00 per pound dry then but were so crowded and dwarfed we transplanted to get a couple years more growth and size, it seldom pays to market too early.

We know of no other crop that is so profitable or one that has continued to increase in price so long or a remedy that remained popular so long.



LAKE SARAH SPECIALTY FARM

F. C. ERKEL, MANAGER

Rockford, - - - Minn.